

In the claims:

Please amend the claims as shown below:

1. (Currently amended) A method for the ~~pre-treatment~~  
5 treatment of chips, comprising:  
~~feeding the chips to a sulphate cooking process where the~~  
~~heating the chips are heated~~ with steam in a steam treatment,  
~~and are thereafter formed into a slurry with an alkali~~  
~~impregnation fluid before cooking in a digester,~~  
10 adding an acidic fluid to the chips during ~~in association with~~  
the steam treatment in an amount that gives the chips at least  
a five-fold increase in an ionic concentration of hydrogen  
ions at an end of the steam treatment compared to steam  
treatment without adding the acidic fluid, ~~and~~  
15 reducing a final pH of the chips by at least 0.5 units,  
forming the chips to a slurry with an alkali impregnation  
fluid,  
conveying the slurry to a digester, and  
cooking the chips in the digester.  
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2. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 1 wherein  
the acidic fluid has a pH that does not exceed 4 and the  
acidic treatment fluid is at least partially added in a  
~~pressurised~~ pressurized steam treatment vessel, at a pressure  
25 in the vessel that exceeds that of a surrounding atmosphere by  
at least 0.5 bar.
3. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 1  
wherein the acidic fluid has a pH that does not exceed 4 and  
30 the acidic treatment fluid is partially added at least in a  
vessel at atmospheric pressure or at a slightly higher  
pressure, at a pressure in the vessel that exceeds that of a  
surrounding atmosphere by between 0 and 0.5 bar.

4. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 2 wherein a volume of the added acidic fluid relative to a volume of the chips does not exceed 2:1.

5 5. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 1 wherein the alkali impregnation fluid in which the heated and acidified chips are formed into a slurry is constituted by a sulphide-rich liquor.

10 6. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 5 wherein the alkali impregnation fluid is constituted by a mixture of at least one of a sulphide-rich white liquor, sulphide-rich black liquor, and/or sulphide-rich green liquor, and the alkali impregnation fluid has a molarity of  $\text{HS}^-$  that  
15 exceeds 0.15 mol/liter.

7. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 6 wherein the alkali impregnation fluid has a molarity of NaOH that does not exceed 0.75 mol/liter.

20 8. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 1 wherein the heating by steam of the chips together with the added acidic fluid takes place during a period of 1-20 minutes and at a temperature in a range of 80-120°C.

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